

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS  
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/04/2015 05:10 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Los Angeles Unified School District (U215H150111)

**Reader #1:** \*\*\*\*\*

|  | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|--|-----------------|---------------|
| <b>Questions</b>                         |                 |               |
| <b>Selection Criteria</b>                |                 |               |
| <b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b> |                 |               |
| 1. Project Evaluation                    | 20              | 15            |
| <b>Sub Total</b>                         | 20              | 15            |
| <b>Total</b>                             | 20              | 15            |

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - Skills for Success Evaluation Panel - 4: 84.215H

Reader #1: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Los Angeles Unified School District (U215H150111)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation provide for examining the effectiveness of project implementation strategies.

(2) The extent to which the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

(4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations.

#### Strengths:

The proposal includes a logic model that articulates activities with short-term outcomes and long-term outcomes. The logic model includes the student and teacher/parent measures (P9). The logic model provides an effective overview of the project. For the evaluation there will be treatment and control conditions (P9). Students in the treatment and control conditions will be matched on "baseline grit scores, baseline college expectations, and participation in student activities" (P18). A standard measure of baseline equivalents is to be used (P23). Teachers will participate by self-selection unless there are too many volunteers, in which case participants will be randomly drawn (P24–25). Thus students will be assigned to treatment condition because they happen to be in the classroom of one of the treatment teachers. Thus the assignment to condition is clearly presented.

A quasi experimental design will be used(P9) along with a regression analysis to disaggregate parent and teacher training effects (P18), as well as other covariable factors (such as those that might be associated with GEAR UP). The proposal recognizes that GEAR UP activities could potentially confound the data and thus the model will account for GEAR UP participation (P9, P20). Moreover, the proposed evaluation will take into account that because the students will be students of need they likely also all have been targeted for other student services (P18). Grit scores along with other factors will also be used for baseline data (P21).

Post "grit scores" will be the dependent variable to test for differences amongst teachers/parents and students who participated in the treatment and those of the control condition (P9). GPA for the students will also be a dependent variable (P19).

The proposal presents clear diagrams representing the analyses in year one and year two (P18–20). The clarity of this presentation is a strength proposal.

Performance feedback for the purpose of continuous improvement is built into the project (P12). The implementation will be monitored at both the classroom and school levels (P12). The continuous improvement process will include monthly meetings of the teachers to discuss implementation. (P12). The project manager will hold monthly meetings with the coaches at each school to review the accomplishment of milestones (P13, P22–23). The evaluator will provide the project co-directors with progress data and will "facilitate a discussion of any programmatic adjustments that might be made in

response to any issues that the evaluation uncovers” (P13). The feedback process for continuous improvement is well described by the proposal.

The school district has a GEAR UP program in place and proposes to use the same evaluation firm. The firm is highly qualified and already knowledgeable of the school district, and so it makes sense that the district would continue with the same evaluator.

**Weaknesses:**

The proposal makes it clear that teachers will self-select and it is their students who will be participants in the treatment condition. However, the proposal also says that students will be matched between treatment and control conditions. These statements seem to contradict each other. It is possible that the analysis will only include students that are matched pairs between the two conditions but that isn't made clear by the proposal if that is what they plan to do.

It is not clear from the proposal what all of the measures will be, where they come from, and to what extent they have been validated. There are also no target values that the project expects to reach as a sign of success. Moreover, GPA is not a recommended dependent variable for achievement. More description of the measures is needed along with an indication of the level of achievement that the project will consider successful and a more reliable measure of achievement.

Both parents and teachers are to receive training in the intervention. While there will be building coaches and teacher meetings that likely can facilitate fidelity to implementation, the proposal makes no mention of how parent fidelity to implementation will be evaluated. The proposal does call for disaggregating teacher and parent effects, but a some means for checking parental fidelity is needed.

It is not clear from the proposal how many students, parents and teachers are to be involved. Proposal does not deal with the potential problem of attrition. The proposal contains no power analysis or discussion of sample size and effect size. These are significant omissions.

The discussion of the implementation mentions milestones (P13) by which progress will be judged; but these milestones are never specified other than one example, “e.g., teachers trained by a specific month” (P13).

**Reader's Score:** 15

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## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Los Angeles Unified School District (U215H150111)

**Reader #2:** \*\*\*\*\*

|  | <b>Points Possible</b> | <b>Points Scored</b> |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Questions</b>                         |                        |                      |
| <b>Selection Criteria</b>                |                        |                      |
| <b>Quality of the Project Evaluation</b> |                        |                      |
| 1. Project Evaluation                    | 20                     | 15                   |
| <b>Sub Total</b>                         | 20                     | 15                   |
| <b>Total</b>                             | 20                     | 15                   |

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - Skills for Success Evaluation Panel - 4: 84.215H

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Los Angeles Unified School District (U215H150111)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation provide for examining the effectiveness of project implementation strategies.

(2) The extent to which the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

(4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well-implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations.

#### Strengths:

The applicant proposes utilizing an external evaluator.

The applicant provides a comprehensive logic model including activities tied to short- and long-term measurable outcomes.

The applicant provides assurances of adherence to scientific principles of empirical research methodology and accounting for contextual factors impacting analyses of services to provide an understanding of the applicability of findings to similar populations suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

The applicant proposes the use of quasi-experimental methods with checks in place to ensure baseline equivalence which should provide evidence of the project's effectiveness in a manner that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with Reservations.

The applicant proposes the use of a regression analysis to assess the effect of parent training over and above any effect of teacher training.

#### Weaknesses:

The applicant proposes the use of student GPAs for matching in the quasi-experimental methods; however, the What Works Clearinghouse does not consider GPA as a reliable source of comparisons for outcome measures since the criteria may differ across teachers, schools, and districts.

The applicant does not provide a targeted effect size or improvement index associated with the project as a measure of the effectiveness of the proposed intervention.

The applicant states that teachers will be allowed to self-select to participate in the program and that the teachers' education level, subjects, and student levels taught will be examined in an attempt to understand potential confounds. However, simply checking these three factors is not sufficient to ensure that these self-selecting teachers will not differ significantly from those who do not participate and would provide valid, unbiased sample versus control groups to

compare project outcomes.

The applicant mentions examining student retention; however, the applicant does not provide a discussion of potential attrition rates or propose development of an attrition standard for the project.

The applicant does not provide specific targets for the stated outcomes of the project.

**Reader's Score:** 15

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**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 09/03/2015 03:33 PM